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The President's Daily Brief

December 3, 1974

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~~Top Secret~~ 25X1

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ISRAEL

Israeli President Katzir is quoted as saying Sunday during a reception for international science writers that Israel has the potential to produce atomic weapons, and would do so if necessary. According to press accounts, Katzir was evasive when asked how long it would take for Israel to produce nuclear weapons and whether parts already existed for them.

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It is highly unusual for Israeli officials to comment on Israeli nuclear capabilities, and Katzir's remarks may well have been intended as a veiled threat to Israel's Arab neighbors. In a lecture at Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv last Thursday, former Israeli defense minister Dayan said that the possibility of the introduction of nuclear arms into the region could not be ruled out and that "one should not think that only the Arabs will have these weapons."

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EGYPT

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USSR-PALESTINIANS

The Soviets apparently won some concessions from Palestine leader Arafat during his visit to Moscow last week, but made it clear that they are not yet ready to reciprocate with unqualified support for the Palestine Liberation Organization. In an end-of-visit communiqué, Arafat moved a step closer to Moscow's position and to a PLO commitment to accept a truncated Palestinian state and, indirectly, Israel's right to exist as a state.

In a tortuously constructed passage, the communiqué states that the PLO should assume responsibility for any Palestinian territory "liberated by the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the seized Arab lands, as demanded by well-known UN decisions." By endorsing this reference to Israeli-occupied territory as opposed to Israel itself, Arafat has conceded--although indirectly--to the Soviet position that Israel proper must continue to exist. Although Arafat privately accepts this as reality, he probably will withhold a more explicit acknowledgement of his position until offered major concessions from Tel Aviv in return.

Arafat's approving reference to "well-known UN decisions," in the same breath as withdrawal, is also a first. It is obviously an allusion to Security Council Resolution 242, which calls for an Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967 and guarantees the "territorial inviolability" of all states in the area.

This concession notwithstanding, the Soviets refrained from an explicit recognition of the PLO as "sole" representative of the Palestinians. They also went no further than before in recognizing the right of the Palestinian people to "statehood," without spelling out just what this means.

Moscow evidently still takes a cool view of a Palestinian government in exile, and the communiqué makes no mention of it. [redacted] 25X1

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The Soviets did announce that a PLO office will open in Moscow in the "nearest future." [redacted] 25X1

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there is as yet no evidence to indicate that the office will be accredited to the Soviet government.

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USSR

Soyuz-16, the manned spacecraft launched early yesterday, is the first manned Soviet mission directly related to the joint Apollo-Soyuz project scheduled for next July.

Tass has announced that the spacecraft is identical to the one the Soviets will use for the joint mission. The crew of the Soyuz-16 is one of the back-up teams for the joint project. The current mission will test new equipment, including a modified docking adapter. The cosmonauts are also to carry out a scientific program that includes photographing the earth; the mission will probably last three to six days.

Because of the serious problems the Soviets have had with their manned space program, they are preparing carefully for the joint mission. Earlier this year they launched two unmanned Soyuz spacecraft that had been modified with an eye toward the Apollo-Soyuz mission.

Since the fatal Soyuz-11 accident in June 1971, the Soviets have flown a total of four manned and six unmanned Soyuz missions, not counting the one now in orbit. Two of the manned flights were made this year. The crew of Soyuz-14 occupied a Salyut space station for approximately three weeks in July; the flight of Soyuz-15 one month later, however, was cut short after two unsuccessful attempts to dock with the space station.

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ETHIOPIA

The recent bombings of government-controlled installations in Addis Ababa were apparently the work of the separatist Eritrean Liberation Front, in retaliation for the military council's decision to step up operations against the rebels.

Reinforcements recently began arriving in Eritrea. Some 1,500 troops will join army units already there. The insurgents apparently decided to deal the first blow, opting for terrorist attacks in the capital in order to demonstrate their ability to strike anywhere in the country.

The military council will probably detain some Eritreans who live in Addis Ababa. After the bombings, the council directed the residents of the capital to carry identification cards, and some have already been arrested for not doing so.

The provisional military government, meanwhile, has shown renewed interest in consummating agreements for US military assistance. The Ethiopians held portions of a package offer in abeyance for several weeks while the late General Aman negotiated for a separate agreement for additional credits and grant aid.

The government now shows a strong desire to proceed immediately with the credit arrangements and the cash purchase of military equipment provided for in the US offer. This intention first surfaced on November 21--two days before the execution of Aman--and was confirmed in a meeting on November 29 between the vice minister of defense and the chief of the US military advisory group.

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LAOS

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SPAIN

The publication yesterday of a long-awaited draft law allowing the formation of political parties in sharply limited form has disappointed those Spaniards favoring wider public participation in politics. The draft statute legalizes "political associations," but makes sure they have no clout by making them subservient to Franco's National Movement.

The Movement is a collection of predominantly rightist groups that have supported Franco since the Civil War. The new law authorizes the Movement to recognize, suspend, or dissolve the "political associations."

Prime Minister Arias wanted a bill that would permit associations independent of the Movement. Arias, however, defended the law in a nationwide speech yesterday by calling it "in agreement with Spanish reality" and a hopeful new step. [redacted] 25X1

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The new law is likely to add to tension that has been building up in Spain. Many will consider the proposed legislation a travesty, and will demonstrate their dissatisfaction by refusing to form "political associations."

Last week, 14 centrist opposition leaders were arrested in Madrid at a meeting called to discuss the launching of a "Democratic Conference" composed of seven Christian Democratic and Socialist political groups. Those arrested were released the next day. Participation in the meeting by a former cabinet minister and by the son of a former chief of the armed forces General Staff lent some respectability to the aims of those present.

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NOTES

Japan: It is not clear whether the Liberal Democrats will accord prime minister - designate Takeo Miki a regular three-year term as party president or confine him to a caretaker role. The staying power of a Miki administration is also uncertain at this point. His personal position will be relatively weak, because he is the first leader of a minor faction to head the Liberal Democrats and was selected abruptly amid a party crisis. In addition, Miki assumes office in the face of intractable economic problems and a burden of recovering public confidence in time for important local elections next spring. Miki's main asset in the effort to hold on to office may be the party's continuing inability to break the political impasse between Ohira and Fukuda, the prime contenders for power.

Iraq-Kurds: The US consul in the Iranian city of Tabriz, who spent several days last week in the border area of western Iran, reports that the Iraqi offensive against the Kurds has "sputtered and finally gone out." Iranian supply lines to the Kurds remain open, Kurdish strongpoints are secure, and Iraqi government forces have made few gains over the past several weeks. Winter weather, already present in that mountainous region, will further hamper Iraqi operations, and the Kurds will probably be able to take back much of the ground they lost over recent months. Other information tends to bear out the consul's assessment.

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